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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

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Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/54/L.58

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered an advance copy of the statement of the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/54/L.58, submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (A/C.5/54/41).

2. The Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution 53/203 A of 18 December 1998, requested the Secretary-General to authorize the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), established under Assembly resolution 48/208 of 21 December 1993, to continue its efforts to facilitate an immediate and durable ceasefire among the Afghan parties and to institute a negotiating process leading to the formation of a broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative government of national unity.

3. Moreover, the General Assembly, for the period 1 January 1998 to 31 December 1999, authorized an appropriation of $9,991,300 under section 3 (Peacekeeping operations and special missions) of the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. As indicated in paragraph 3 of the statement (A/C.5/54/41), total expenditures for the period are estimated at $6,345,500, resulting in an unencumbered balance of $3,645,800. Annex I.A to the statement contains a preliminary performance report for the period 1 January 1998 to 31 December 1999.

4. Under the terms of draft resolution A/54/L.58, the General Assembly would, *inter alia*, take note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/536-S/1999/1145) and endorse the observations and recommendations set out therein; reiterate its position that the United

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Nations must continue to play its central and impartial role in international efforts towards peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict; and support the intention of the Secretary-General to strengthen UNSMA by appointing a new Head of Mission, by progressively moving its head office to Kabul and by increasing its presence in neighbouring countries.

5. The estimated costs for the extension of the mandate of the UNSMA from 1 January to 31 December 2000 amount to $3,407,600, as indicated in paragraph 14 and annex I.A of the statement (A/C.5/54/41). This provision would support requirements for a component of 2 military advisers, 27 international staff (19 Professional, 3 General Service and 5 Field Service) and 49 local staff serving the mission. The only adjustments in this connection reflect the replacement of the previous D-2 post for the Head of Mission by one at the level of Assistant Secretary-General for the new Head of Mission, as was the case prior to 1999, and the reduction in the number of military advisers from four to two, owing to current difficulties experienced in the fulfilment of their monitoring and advisory activities. The Committee has no objection to this proposal, on the understanding that if the intervention of the Special Envoy, whose activities are frozen at present (at the level of Under-Secretary-General), were to be renewed, the need for the post at the level of Assistant Secretary-General would be reviewed.

6. The Committee notes that the provision of $1,710,500 for staff costs assumes a vacancy rate of 44 per cent for Professional staff and 50 per cent for General Service staff in the costing of salaries and common staff costs for 2000, an adjustment based on experience for 1998-1999. Operational costs, appropriated at the level of $3,879,100 for the biennium 1998-1999, are estimated at $1,192,100 for 2000. The decrease reflects previous mission expenditure, as well as decreased requirements related to premises and accommodation and communications and other equipment.

7. In this regard, the Committee notes, in accordance with paragraph 85 of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/536-S/1999/1145), that in order to increase the Organization's political effectiveness, UNSMA will progressively move its head office from Islamabad to Kabul, starting with the stationing of political officers in Kabul and Kandahar. The timing of their deployment, however, will depend on security conditions. The Secretary-General also intends to open a sub-office in Tehran in early 2000 in order to increase regular contact with neighbouring States, Afghan factions and individuals; and arrangements will be made to ensure effective liaison with representatives of Afghan factions in Dushanbe. As indicated in annex I.C, paragraph 5, of the statement (A/C.5/54/41), the $48,600 provision for rental of premises, based on 1999 actual rental costs, includes monthly costs for Kabul ($550), Islamabad ($2,900) and Tehran ($600), while excluding 1999 rental storage costs and other costs associated with five additional locations that are not expected to be operational during 2000.

8. The Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/54/L.58, the requirements of $3,407,600 would be charged against the provision for special political missions requested in section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/206.